

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-15

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FM AMEMBASSY BONN
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AMEMBASSY PARIS
DIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L BONN 16734

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, EEC, AR, CI, GW
SUBJECT: FRG ANALYSIS OF ARGENTINE TROOP MOVEMENTS

REFS: (A) BUENOS AIRES 7069 (NOTAL)
(B) BUENOS AIRES 7014
(C) BONN 16180 (NOTAL)

1. THE GERMANS REGARD OUR ASSESSMENT OF THE ARGENTINE
MILITARY PREPARATIONS (REFTELS A AND B) AS FAIRLY CLOSE
TO THEIR OWN. THEY APPEAR MORE CONCERNED, HOWEVER, THAT
THESE PREPARATIONS, ALONG WITH A HARDENING OF ATTITUDES
ON BOTH SIDES, MIGHT LEAD TO A CONFLICT BETWEEN CHILE
AND ARGENTINA.

2. WE MET WITH FOREIGN OFFICE DIRECTOR OF LATIN
AMERICAN AFFAIRS HOFF AND DESCRIBED ASSESSMENT (REFTELS
A & B) OF THE TENSION BETWEEN ARGENTINA AND CHILE.
HOFF INDICATED THAT, ALTHOUGH THEIR ANALYSIS PARALLELED
OURS, THE FRG WAS MORE CONCERNED ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY
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THAT A CONFLICT MIGHT DEVELOP. THE FRG EMBASSY IN
BUENOS AIRES HAD REPORTED A TENDENCY ON THE PART
OF ARGENTINE MILITARY OFFICERS TO BE WILLING TO GO TO
THE BRINK OF WAR OVER THE BEAGLE CHANNEL DISPUTE. THE
FRG ALSO PERCEIVED AN ESCALATION OF ARGENTINE DEMANDS.
EARLIER, ARGENTINA WOULD HAVE ACCEPTED A CHILEAN
RENUNCIATION OF THE MARITIME ZONES OF THE ISLANDS

CONCERNED. NOW, THEY WERE INCLUDING POSSESSION OF THE ISLANDS THEMSELVES IN THEIR DEMANDS ON CHILE. ALSO, A HIGH-RANKING CHILEAN MILITARY OFFICER HAS TOLD THE FRG EMBASSY IN SANTIAGO THAT ARGENTINE OCCUPATION OF THE THREE ISLANDS WOULD MEAN WAR.

3. HOFF SAID THE FOREIGN OFFICE BELIEVES THE US SHOULD CONSIDER ACTION THROUGH THE OAS TO FORESTALL A POSSIBLE CONFLICT BETWEEN ARGENTINA AND CHILE. FOR ITS PART, THE FRG HAS ALREADY CAUTIONED ARGENTINA, THROUGH THE DEPARTING ARGENTINE AMBASSADOR (REF. C), ABOUT ITS ACTIONS. ARGENTINA HAS NOT YET REPLIED TO THIS PRESENTATION. IN ADDITION, THE GERMANS ARE CONSIDERING A DEMARCHE BY THEIR CHARGE ON THE ARGENTINE FOREIGN MINISTER TO EMPHASIZE THEIR CONCERN. FINALLY, THEY ARE THINKING OF RECOMMENDING, IN THEIR CAPACITY AS EC PRESIDENT, AN EXPRESSION OF CONCERN BY THE NINE.

4. THE FRG HAS ALREADY QUIETLY DECIDED TO PUT OFF FURTHER ARGENTINE REQUESTS FOR MILITARY SUPPLIES UNTIL ARGENTINE ACTIONS BECOME LESS THREATENING. HOWEVER, UNLESS THE SITUATION WORSENS, EXISTING MILITARY SUPPLY ARRANGEMENTS WILL BE CONTINUED. IN REPLY TO OUR QUERY, HOFF EXPLAINED THAT THE FRG HAS NO SET FORMAL CRITERIA TO DETERMINE AN "AREA OF TENSION." (REFTEL B).

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5. HOFF WAS MOST APPRECIATIVE OF THE ASSESSMENT BY EMBASSY BUENOS AIRES, AND EXPRESSED A STRONG DESIRE TO KEEP IN TOUCH WITH US IN MONITORING THE DISPUTE. HE PROMISED A REPORT TO US IF THE DEMARCHE MENTIONED IN PARA 3 TAKES PLACE.

6. COMMENT: THE GERMANS ARE OBVIOUSLY QUITE CONCERNED, AND WE THINK IT WOULD BE USEFUL TO KEEP THEM INFORMED OF OUR PERCEPTION OF THE SITUATION. WE ARE, OF COURSE, IN NO POSITION TO MAKE A JUDGMENT ON HOFF'S SUGGESTION THAT THE U.S. CONSIDER OAS ACTION ON THE MATTER. WE SEE SOME MERIT, HOWEVER, IN GIVING THE GERMANS OUR THINKING ON THIS SUGGESTED COURSE OF ACTION.
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